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PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #0056/01 0071229
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 071229Z JAN 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8958
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC//NSC// PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000056

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/02/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT TIKRIT: DOES THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S REACH
EXTEND TO SALAH AD DIN?

REF: A. BAGHDAD 4666
[B](#). BAGHDAD 4613
[C](#). BAGHDAD 4331

Classified By: Stephanie Miley, PRT Team Leader, for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

[1](#). (U) This is a PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din cable.

[2](#). (C) SUMMARY. The distance between the central GOI and the Salah ad Din (SaD) Provincial Government appears to be widening. Local politicians have little to no communication with the national level political parties, leaving many to become independents or to carry party membership as flags of convenience. SaD residents see no tangible efforts toward reforming de-Ba'athification or implementing reconciliation, especially in the wake of the murder of 15 former military officers who were traveling to Baghdad to discuss PM al Maliki's announcement of the re-introduction of former regime military officers into the Iraqi Army (IA). Provincial security continues to deteriorate, and the provincial Iraqi Security Forces see no GOI effort to support them, leaving the province feeling as if it has taken a backseat to attempts to re-claim the capital. If the GOI does not attempt to bridge the gap and expand its influence in the province, it risks further weakening its legitimacy and isolating itself from the true needs of its provincial constituents. END SUMMARY.

Political Parties as Flags of Convenience

[3](#). (C) Like galaxies in a universe accelerating away from each other, the distance between the central GOI and the Salah ad Din (SaD) Provincial Government appears to be widening. And like shipping flags of convenience, many leading politicians and provincial council members in Salah ad Din are members in name only of their declared political parties with national affiliations. Generally referring to themselves as independents, they rarely mention their political affiliations, and only if it seems beneficial. Local branches of political parties do not meet and claim to have little to no communication with their national-level offices. According to SaD Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) representative Ibrahim Karnik, IIP, the national party which enjoys the broadest support in the province, is dormant and will remain so until just before the elections. He and other IIP representatives have expressed frustration that the party's national office does not consult them on issues or inform them of major policy developments. Deputy Governor General Abdullah Ajabarah al Jabouri, a nominal member of the Iraqi National Unity Party, says that few politicians in the region have any real allegiance to the parties with which they are affiliated.

No Evidence of Deba'ath Reform or Reconciliation

¶4. (C) Days after PM al Maliki's December 16 reconciliation speech, where he announced the re-introduction of former regime military officers into the Iraqi Army, 15 former military officers from SaD were murdered while traveling to Baghdad to discuss the PM's announcement (reftel A). The PM's reconciliation speech was received in the province with a heavy dose of skepticism (reftel B), and the ensuing murders solidified SaD residents' view that al Maliki is either incapable or not committed to bringing about meaningful reconciliation or addressing the two key issues for the majority of residents in the province: rectifying the wholesale dismissal of the former Iraqi Army corps and reforming the de-Ba'athification process. SaD leaders believe that the al Maliki Administration's commitment to reconciliation is not inclusive, as no one from the province, or from the Ba'ath Party, was invited to participate in the conference. (Note: Baath party members living outside of Iraq were informally invited to the conference as long as they did not attend under the name of the Ba'ath party. Ba'ath Party representatives refused this condition and were subsequently not formally invited. End Note).

¶5. (C) Recently, several politicians and religious sheikhs have complained more fervently than usually about the GOI's sectarian nature and called for a strong, secular leader to take control. All mentioned former Iraqi PM Ayad Allawi by name, contrasting his ability with al Maliki's to run effectively the central government.

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ISF without Support in the Province

¶6. (C) As provincial security continues to deteriorate (ref C), SaD residents blame lack of GOI support for the Iraqi Army (IA) and Iraqi Police (IP) in the province. Many cities throughout the province, including Samarra and Bayji, do not believe they have an adequate number of police officers, and the IA is unable to maintain security on several of the province's major roadways, such as the highway between Tikrit and al Tuz (en route to Kirkuk). The IP lack sufficient fuel to patrol areas and to respond to incidents, and the IA has inadequate supplies and equipment.

¶7. (C) With the announcement of the al Maliki Administration's renewed efforts to secure Baghdad in early 2007, many SaD residents have questioned when, if ever, the GOI will act on the poor security situation in Salah ad Din. While the security situation is better here than in other areas, SaD residents are) naturally) focused on issues close to home.

Comment

¶8. (C) The consequence of flag of convenience, political affiliation may be that the al Maliki government's good intentions toward reconciliation are falling short, as they resonate no further than Baghdad, leaving out large numbers of the intended audience, which further hampers the GOI's efforts. The GOI does not appear to have a PR campaign in Salah ad Din, and that is causing it to lose ground in the minds of the province's residents. If it does not attempt to bridge the gap and expand its influence in the provinces, it risks further damaging its legitimacy and isolating itself from the true needs of its provincial constituents. Much like U.S. domestic public service campaigns on buying war bonds, conserving energy, or preventing litter, targeted messaging can have an impact in shaping public attitudes and

response. An aggressive information awareness campaign in the province about the progress the GOI is making in developing democratic institutions and improving the lives of average Iraqis could be an effective means of reasserting the GOI's role in the province. END COMMENT.

19. (U) For additional reporting from PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din, please see our SIPRNET Reporting Blog:
<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Tikrit>.
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